

FAQs: Categorisation

July 2026

Will the register and list be updated?

Ofcom is required to keep the register of categorised services and the emerging Category 1 list up to date. This means that services may be added to or removed from the register and list as the online landscape evolves.

In a limited number of cases, we have sought additional information from service providers to support ongoing assessments opened for the purposes of establishing the register. We are in the process of completing our assessments of these services and as soon as these assessments are completed, we will update the register where required.

On an ongoing basis, we envision that we will carry out regular reviews and updates of the register and list. These reviews will be supplemented with ad hoc updates where necessary, for instance where we become aware of changes that may impact the services that are on the register and list (including following a request for removal from the provider of a service already on the register), or where we identify services are likely to meet the threshold conditions for the register, or conditions for the list.

We will provide more information on our approach to updating the register and list in due course.

How were the threshold conditions determined?

The Categorisation threshold conditions were set in [regulations](#) made by the UK Government in 2025. Ofcom was required to provide research and advice to the Secretary of State on categorisation threshold conditions to inform this process. We submitted our [research and advice](#) to the Secretary of State in February 2024.

Will a rapidly growing service be added to the register?

For services already operating today, the threshold conditions mean that a service needs to have monthly average UK users over a certain number for a period of at least 6 months. Where a service has been in operation for less than 6 months, the threshold conditions relating to user numbers can be assessed for the period since the service was launched.

Where services are rapidly growing, we will keep their user number growth under review and will open assessments at the appropriate point where relevant.

Will you be publishing the individual decisions for each service?

We plan to publish our final decisions for each categorised service in the coming months. We will be carrying out a confidentiality process with service providers and will publish our decisions once this has been completed.

Does being on the register mean that a service is risky?

Services are placed on the register when they meet the threshold conditions set by Government. These thresholds relate only to the number of UK users of a service, and the functionalities and/or characteristics (where relevant) of the service. In setting the thresholds, the Secretary of State was required to consider the following criteria:

- Category 1: the likely impact of user numbers and functionalities of a service on how easily, quickly and widely user-generated content is disseminated on user-to-user services
- Category 2A: the likely impact of user numbers of the search engine on the level of risk of harm from search content that is illegal or harmful to children
- Category 2B: the likely impact of user numbers and functionalities of a service on the level of risk of harm to individuals from content that is illegal or harmful to children disseminated by means of the service.

Why aren't small and risky services included on the register?

The threshold conditions set by Government mean that only services with a large UK user base and particular functionalities and/or characteristics are included in the register. We are not able to include a service on the register if they do not have enough UK users to meet the threshold conditions. The user number thresholds for Category 1 services are 7 million or 34 million active UK users (depending on functionalities), 7m for Category 2A services, or 3 million for Category 2B services.

This does not prevent us from taking action in relation to smaller, risky services. All services in scope of the Online Safety Act are required to take action in relation to illegal content and, where relevant, content harmful to children. We have a range of tools we use with services to drive change and improve compliance, including taking enforcement action where appropriate.

Why is there such a range of service types included in the register?

The Online Safety Act applies to a large number of online services, across a wide range of different user-to-user and search service types. Many services share similar functionalities and characteristics, such as using content recommender systems or the ability for users to message one another.

Our role is to assess services against the threshold conditions set out in the categorisation regulations, using the best evidence available. Where services meet the thresholds, Ofcom is required to add these services to the register.

What is the purpose of the emerging Category 1 list?

The emerging Category 1 list includes services that are close to, but do not currently meet, the threshold conditions for Category 1 services. Services may be on the list because they have a large UK user base, but not the relevant functionalities and characteristics required. Alternatively, services may be on the list because, though the service does have the relevant functionalities and characteristics, the UK user base does not yet exceed the threshold. Services on the emerging Category 1 list are not subject to any additional duties.

How have you taken the Wikipedia judgment into account?

The Government's regulations which set the threshold conditions for categorisation were subject to legal challenge, which concluded in August 2025. The threshold conditions remained in place following this challenge. We carefully considered the judgment as part of our decision-making process and adjusted our plans for the categorisation register accordingly. We issued provisional decisions to providers in March 2026, which gave the providers of services that we believed met the threshold conditions an opportunity to provide representations on our provisional decisions before we finalised the register.

Did services have a chance to input into the process?

We have used our information gathering powers to seek information from service providers in relation to the threshold conditions. We used this information, along with internal research and third-party data, in our assessments of each service.

In late March we gave the providers of services that we provisionally considered met the threshold conditions an opportunity to comment on our provisional decisions before we finalised the register and list.

Can service providers appeal their categorisation status and what does that mean if they do?

For services on the register, service providers will have one month to appeal our decisions in the Upper Tribunal, from the date of receiving our decision. If a service provider appeals our categorisation decision, then the relevant additional duties will be temporarily suspended until the appeal is resolved.

For services on the emerging Category 1 list, services providers will have three months to bring a judicial review of our decisions in the High Court, from the date of receiving our decision.

At any point, providers of services on the register are able to provide Ofcom with evidence that their categorised service(s) no longer meets the relevant threshold conditions. Ofcom must consider this information and if we consider that there has been a change to the service that is likely to be relevant, assess the service to determine whether it should be removed from the register, or whether the evidence supports a service meeting the threshold conditions for a different category.